

Message Text

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42

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 INRE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY ATHENS PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 8779

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, LE

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT SARKIS DESIGNATES SALIM AHMAD HUSS AS PRIME MINISTER

1. LATE DECEMBER 8, PRESIDENT SARKIS DESIGNATED DR SALIM AHMAD HUSS (OR "AL-HUSS") TO FORM A NEW GOVERNMENT AND THUS BECOME LEBANON'S NEXT PRIME MINISTER. BIO DATA ON HUSS FOLLOWS:

2. FAMILY. HUSS WAS BORN DEC 20, 1929, IN BEIRUT, SON OF AHMAD HUSS, A PHARMACIST, AND WADAD HUSS. THE HUSS' ARE A PROMINENT SUNNI BEIRUT FAMILY. HE MARRIED LEILA FIRAWAN (PHAROUN), A CHRISTIAN, ON MAR 24, 1957. THEY HAVE ONE DAUGHTER, WADAD. HE SPEAKS FLUENT ENGLISH.

3. STUDIES: HUSS RECEIVED A BBA DEGREE FROM AUB IN 1952 CUM LAUDE AND MBA DEGREE IN 1957, AND A PH.D. FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF INDIANA IN BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS IN 1961.

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4. CAREER. FROM 1952 TO 1954, ACCOUNTANT WITH TAPLINE; MEMBER OF BEIRUT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE 1954-55; INSTRUCTOR AND LATER AN ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR AT THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT; HUSS WAS FINANCIAL COUNSELOR FOR THE KUWAIT FUND FOR ARAB ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND BECAME PRESIDENT OF THE BANKING CONTROL COMMISSION IN MAY 1967. IN 1966-67, HE PLAYED A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN DEVELOPMENT OF BANKING ADMINISTRATION IN LEBANON AFTER THE INTRA BANK CRASH. HE HAS BEEN PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL BANK FOR INDUSTRIAL AND TOURISTIC DEVELOPMENT SINCE 1973.

5. ATTITUDE TOWARD THE US. HUSS, IN ADDITION TO HIS AMERICAN EDUCATION, HAS A FRIENDLY ATTITUDE TOWARD THE US. HE GAVE TWO LECTURES AT THE AMERICAN EMBASSY UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE EMBASSY TRADE PROMOTION COMMITTEE IN 1974-75.

6. COMMENT: HUSS IS REPUTED TO BE BRILLIANT BUT SELF-EFFACING. HE IS A CLOSE PERSONAL FRIEND OF PRESIDENT SARKIS, FROM THEIR YEARS TOGETHER IN THE LEADERSHIP OF THE BEIRUT BANKING COMMUNITY. HE IS THE PRINCIPAL AUTHOR OF AN EXTENSIVE RECONSTRUCTION PLAN WHICH IS EXPECTED TO BE FORMALLY PRESENTED TO PRESIDENT SARKIS SOON. BOTH BEFORE AND SINCE SARKIS' INAUGURATION, HUSS HAS BEEN HIS PRINCIPAL ADVISOR ON RECONSTRUCTION AND FINANCE. IT IS REPORTED THAT HUSS WAS UNENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT BECOMING PRIME MINISTER, PREFERRING TO DEVOTE ALL HIS ENERGIES TO RECONSTRUCTION, PERHAPS AS MINISTER OF FINANCE OR ECONOMY.

7. HUSS AND SARKIS ARE EXPECTED TO DESIGNATE A CABINET OF "TECHNOCRATS" WITHIN THE NEXT FEW DAYS. NAMES MENTIONED MOST AUTHORITATIVELY INCLUDE FARID RAPHAEL, ASSAD RIZK, SALAH SELMAN, FUAD BOUTROS, AND MOHAMMAD CHEAITO. NONE OF THESE MEN IS CONSIDERED A "POLITICIAN," ALTHOUGH BOUTROS, WHO IS LIKELY TO BE THE NEW FOREIGN MINISTER, PREVIOUSLY HELD THAT POSITION. ALTHOUGH THE CABINET WILL BE "NON-POLITICAL," IT WILL RESPECT THE TRADITIONAL ALLOCATION OF POSTS AMONG THE VARIOUS LEBANESE RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES.

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8. NEXT STEPS: HUSS WAS VERBALLY CHARGED BY PRESIDENT SARKIS DEC 6 WITH FORMING A NEW GOVERNMENT. AFTER HE PREPARES A CABINET LIST, THE PRESIDENT WILL, UNDER ARTICLE 53 OF THE CONSTITUTION, ISSUE A DECREE OR DECREES WITH THE EFFECT OF FORMALLY INSTALLING THE NEW MINISTERS AND DISMISSING MINISTERS OF THE KARMI GOVERNMENT. LEBANESE PRACTISE WOULD THEN EXPECT THE

PRIME MINISTER TO PRESENT HIS CABINET TO PARLIAMENT AND
MAKE A STATEMENT ON HIS GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAM, WHICH
WOULD BE FOLLOWED BY A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE. (UNDER
ARTICLE 68 OF THE CONSTITUTION, ANY MINISTER MUST
RESIGN AFTER A VOTE OF NO-CONFIDENCE.) IN THE WEEKS
SINCE SARKIS' INAUGURATION, THE ORGANIZING COMMITTEE
OF THE PARLIAMENT HAS BEEN ACTIVE, AND A FEW DAYS AGO
IT DEFINITELY DETERMINED TO ESTABLISH ITS PROVISIONAL
MEETING PLACE AT THE MANSUR PALACE. IT SEEMS LIKELY
THAT THE PARLIAMENT WILL NOT DELAY FOR LONG IN
RATIFYING THE APPOINTMENT OF HUSS AND THE OTHER MINISTERS
THAT HE AND SARKIS SELECT.
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